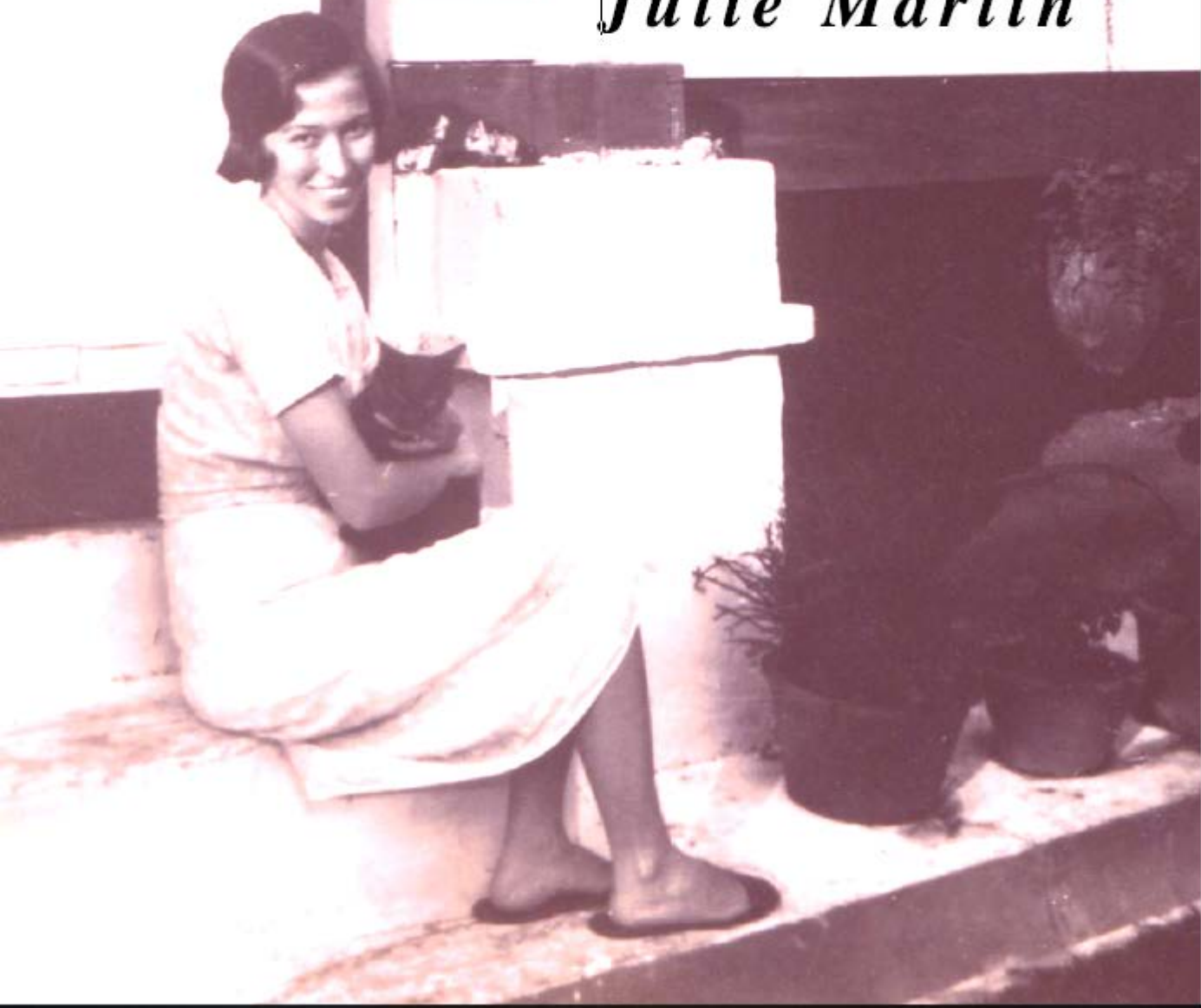


DISCOVERING DAISY'S DAD

Julie Martin



D i s c o v e r i n g D a i s y ' s D a d

J u l i e M a r t i n

Discovering Daisy's Dad
Julie Martin

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For my husband Rod, Daisy's second son, the one who was given the name Rowland to honour her father. As well as being blest with many of his parent's fine qualities he has always been my greatest supporter, cheering me on from the sidelines and always giving me his unconditional love, support and encouragement.

Introduction

Ask any researcher. It's never the outcome; it's the thrill of the chase. Not that the find isn't exciting; it is. But what lingers long after the breakthrough is the memory of events along the way. The random remark, a chance meeting, the thought that scampers into the mind when least expected, the words on the page that beg to be noticed. It's these and what results from them that produces the excitement.

I make this observation because the story that follows isn't essentially the story of Daisy and her father, it's the story of a chase which played out over nineteen years; a chase that had many twists and turns along the way, as well as some lovely moments. I wrote it because it was time to bring my pursuit to a close and clarify what had been revealed along the way. When completed, I submitted it for publication in the *Western Ancestor*, the quarterly journal of the Western Australian Genealogical Society. I hoped, if published, that readers would enjoy the narrative and find inspiration to embark on their own adventure.

As I began to write, it became apparent that the story would be best told in two parts, but, having underestimated my material, it became necessary to extend the second segment into a third. Then came a surprising development and a fourth part was warranted. The decision to bring all the parts together and publish them as a single entity came only after a positive response from those who followed the narrative in the *Western Ancestor*.

So too, did the decision to introduce each of the four parts with lines from Thomas Hardy's, *After a journey*. Hardy's poem was a lament for the loss of his wife but underlying it was a desire to examine the past and revisit it. Many of the lines from the poem mirrored my thoughts as I wrote about my journey of discovery and seemed appropriate to include.

Daisy didn't know who her father was but I believe her descendants should. In telling this story, I've taken the opportunity to publish as many images as possible and those of Daisy and the Martin family have kindly been provided by her children. Those in the Postscript have been generously supplied by Moyna Harland and those which depict Rowan and his family and friends have come from the Shaw/Woods family archive.

Without doubt, there would be no conclusion, nor in fact, any story worth telling had it not been for Robert & Ann Woods. Their acknowledgement of Daisy and the sharing of photographs, information and relevant documents has been the most inspiring part of this journey. I cannot begin to thank them adequately. I only hope they have some understanding of how much their generosity has meant to me and Daisy's family.

Julie Martin

July 2018

The beginning...



*Hereto I come to view a voiceless ghost;
Whither, O whither will its whim now draw me?*

*Ipoh, Daisy's
birthplace
and childhood
home*

*Kuala Lumpur,
location of the
Bukit Nanas
Convent,
Daisy's home
until her
marriage*



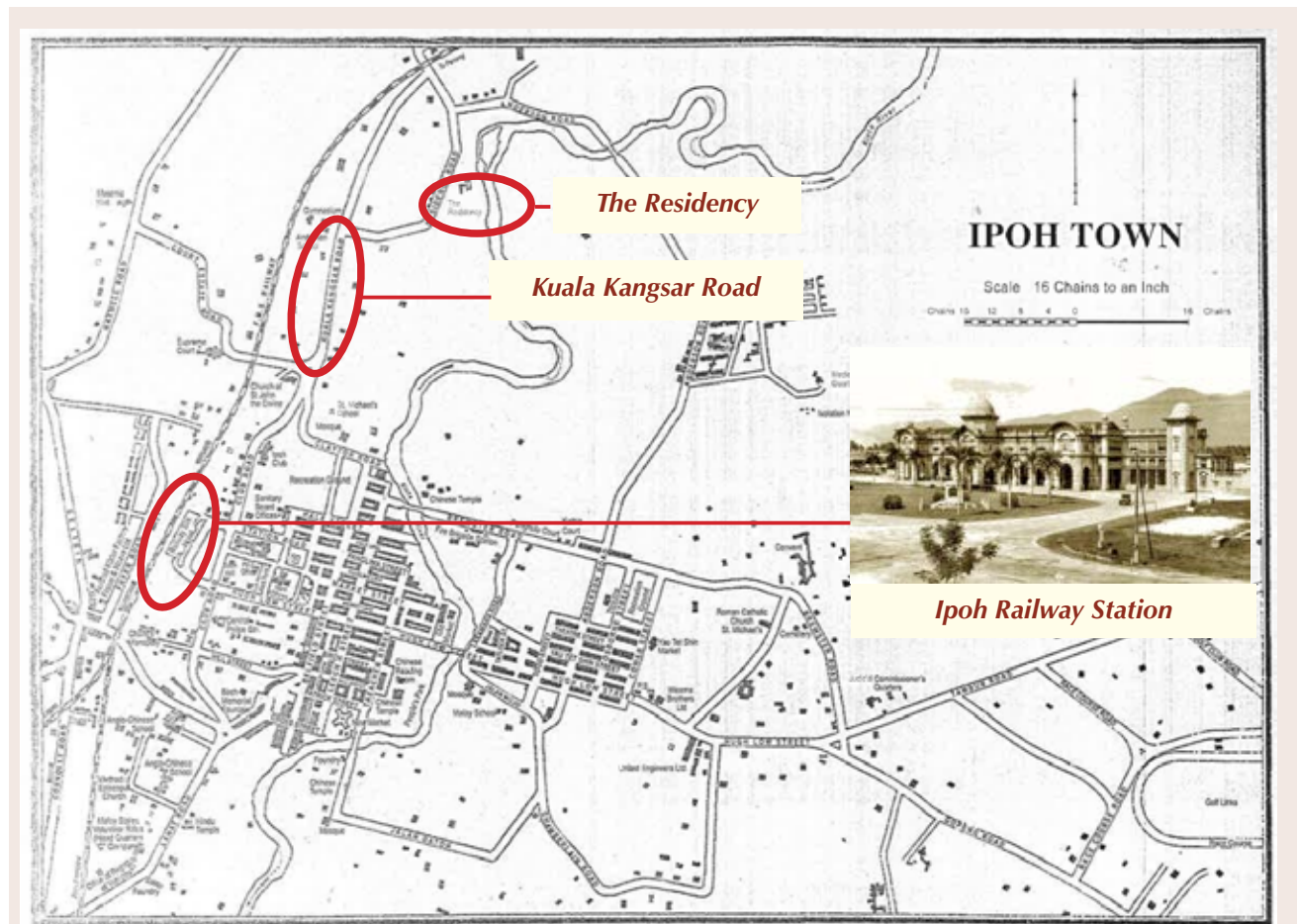
Some might say Daisy's life had been challenging; she described herself as "very lucky". That was indicative of who she was. Warm, intelligent and gracious, she had a playful sense of humour and always saw the best in people and situations.

Daisy was my mother-in-law and in a recorded conversation¹ six months before her death, she told me what she remembered of her early life. She was born in December, 1910 in Ipoh, the capital of Perak, then one of four regions which made up the Federated Malay States established by the British Government in 1895. At the time of her birth, Ipoh was developing rapidly. A pretty town set among limestone outcrops, it was the centre of a highly productive tin mining area. There were also several outlying rubber plantations.

Daisy showed me two old and somewhat battered photographs, the only mementos she had of her parents. Her father she understood to be Rowland Shaw, a Scottish lawyer who was killed on the Western Front during the Great War. Although she had no recollection of him, she was proud that his name appeared on the Cenotaph erected in Kuala Lumpur to honour those from the Federated Malay States who enlisted and died in the 1914-1918 conflict. When telling me about her father, she was most insistent that his given name, Rowland, was spelt with a 'w'. Her mother she knew as Meh Lian, a Siamese woman. Although a British subject by birth, Daisy was classified as Eurasian (a person of mixed European and Asian ancestry) and her future was uncertain. There was "no pity for the outcast children created by unions between European men and Asian women."²



*Left: Rowland (sic) Shaw, Right: Meh Lian.
These are the only images Daisy had of her parents.
I regret not asking her when and where they were
taken and how she came by them.*



Above: Street map of Ipoh c1910, showing the British Residency and the Kuala Kangsar Road, the location of Daisy's home. Inset: The Ipoh Railway Station.

Below (left): Anglo Chinese School, Ipoh about 1913

Below (right): Convent of the Holy Infant Jesus, Ipoh, taken in the 1920s



As a child, Daisy and her mother lived in a modest house on Ipoh's Kuala Kangsar Road not far from the British Residency. When she reached school age, she was enrolled at the Anglo Chinese institution and later, the local Catholic convent. Then came a day she vividly recalled some seventy years later.

"I was 10 plus and remember the day very well. It was 1st July, 1921 and I was wearing a striped navy blue and white dress which my mother had made for me."

Mother and daughter went to the nearby railway station and travelled by train to Kuala Lumpur, then the capital of the Federated Malay States and now the capital of Malaysia. There they were met by a Mr. Caverhill, a man Daisy described as her guardian and the trio made their way to the Convent of the Holy Infant Jesus, Bukit Nanas where Daisy was enrolled. This girls' school established by the Dames of St. Maur, a French order of Catholic nuns, catered for Eurasian boarders and day scholars and had a tiered structure. The students were grouped according to the fees paid for their schooling and the first class boarders, of which Daisy was one, had additional comforts and privileges. From that July day onwards, ties with Ipoh and her mother were all but severed; the Bukit Nanas Convent became Daisy's home and the nuns and fellow students, her family.



Convent of the Holy Infant Jesus, Bukit Nanas, Kuala Lumpur



Student Group – Convent of the Infant Jesus, Bukit Nanas, Kuala Lumpur. c1927.

Daisy went on to tell me that once a month, her mother made the six hour return train journey from Ipoh to Kuala Lumpur to spend time with her and after some years, Meh Lian was able to visit more frequently. Daisy assumed from this that her mother was now living in Kuala Lumpur. Then Daisy noticed Meh Lian looking increasingly unwell and suddenly her visits ceased. Daisy was never told what had happened to her but many years later heard by chance that she'd returned to Thailand where she ended her days.

When talking about her mother, Daisy's voice softened noticeably. She said Meh Lian was a sweet, gentle person and an accomplished seamstress who brought her beautiful dresses and expensive items—Irish linen hankies, stuffed prunes, ginger nuts and the like. Wistfully, she spoke of the distance that grew between them but told of her immense pride when an English nun remarked after one of Meh Lian's visits:

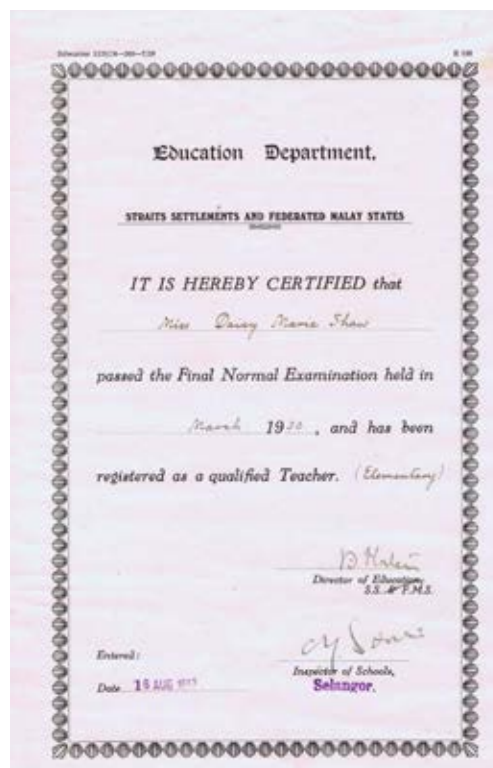
"Daisy, your Mum is a lady".

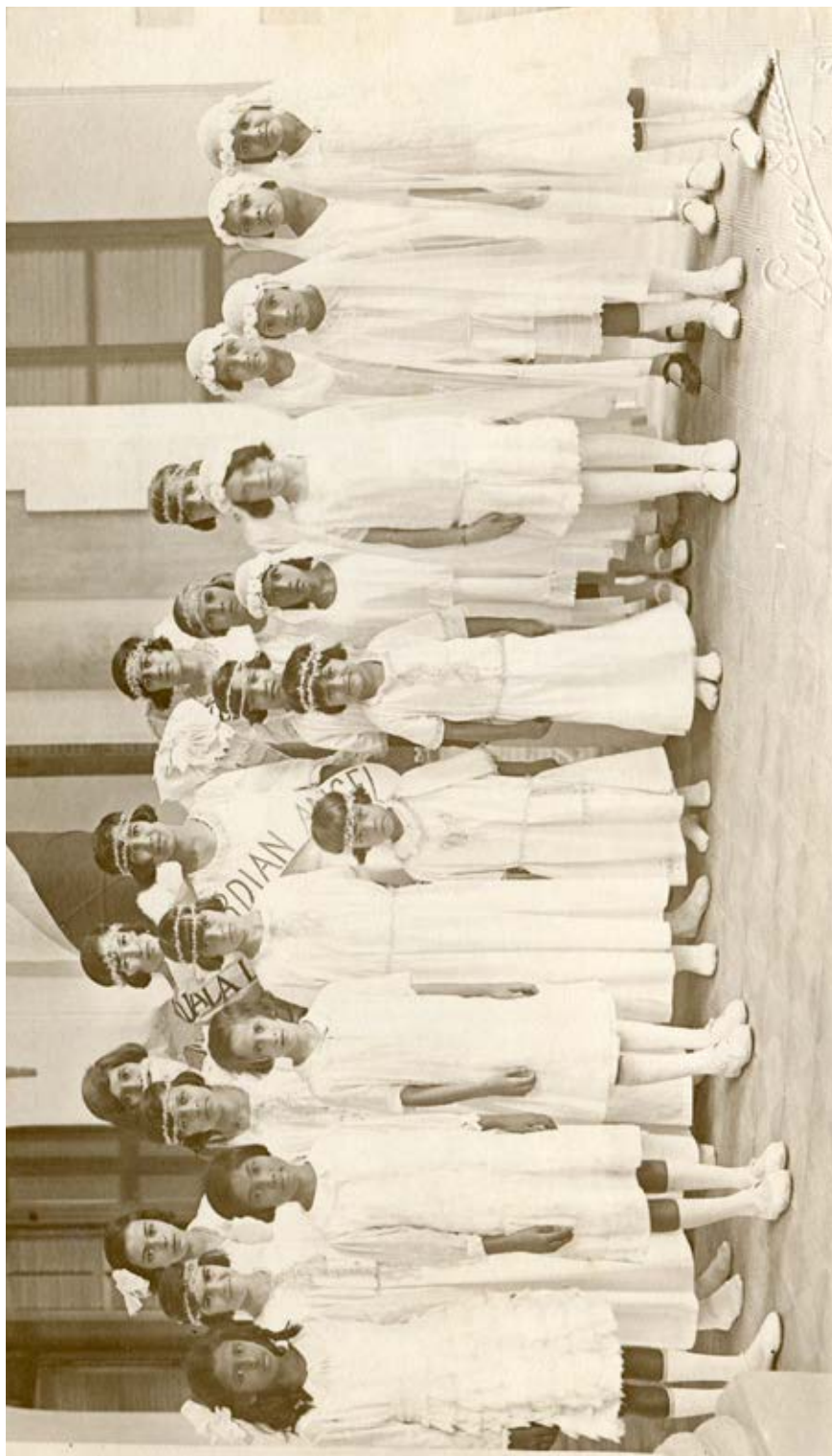
That comment meant the world to her.



Daisy and her best friend Margaret Devitt. c1920. Both girls were to become members of the Martin family – Daisy following her marriage to Donald Martin and Margaret after her marriage to widower Walter Fitzpatrick who was initially married to Harriette Martin, Donald Martin's sister.

On the eve of her sixteenth birthday, Daisy was among the one hundred and twenty three girls in British Malaya who sat for the Cambridge School Certificate Examination. She was one of only sixty girls to satisfy the examiners. The nuns told her she was an above average student, one teacher declaring that her maths ability indicated that she had “the brain of a man”. There was mention of enrolling her at the University of Singapore but ultimately, she and many of her friends were guided into the teaching profession. After qualifying as an elementary teacher in 1930, Daisy joined the lay staff at the Bukit Nanas Convent and continued living there until her marriage in 1934.





*Back row: Daisy, third from left, in a school pageant.
Bukit Nanas Convent, Kuala Lumpur, c1927.*

Caverhill she saw only the once, on that July day in 1921. He did however write to her occasionally and in 1936 she received his final letter. He told her he was retiring and returning to Scotland and with no forwarding address, she lost touch.

As Daisy finished telling me about her childhood, questions were racing through my mind. Who was Rowland Shaw and why was he in Malaya? What was the relationship between Shaw and Meh Lian? With her father dead, who paid Daisy's living and educational expenses? Who supported her mother and provided the items she brought to Daisy on a regular basis? Was it Caverhill and if so, what was his connection? After Daisy's death, despite being new to family history research, I set out to find some answers.

Several applications to the Malaysian authorities for Daisy's birth certificate, some made from within Malaysia and some from Australia were met with silence.

Despite the lack of resources, I thought I'd find mention of Daisy's father on the Commonwealth War Graves Commission database³. Little chance.

Searching for Rowland Shaw or R Shaw without knowing his age, regiment, place and/or date of death was impossible. To add to the difficulties, Scottish birth records were mostly inaccessible and the few available university and law directories led nowhere. I'd hit the genealogist's brick wall with a loud thud.

Several years went by. Daisy's dad remained a mystery.

In 1997, Don, the youngest of Daisy's four sons, visited Kuala Lumpur and had a photograph taken of himself alongside his grandfather's name on the Cenotaph. As I looked at the image, an idea that had been lurking in the back of my mind began to take shape.

I'd had experience with Western Australian Government archives and knew the type of records created by British colonial administrations. There was a distinct possibility that the Malaysian Archives, having taken over the government records produced during British rule, would have a file about



Daisy Shaw's son, Don Martin (Olympic hockey silver and bronze medallist) at the Cenotaph in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

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or University candidate, who is not serving in the ranks.
APPLICATION FOR APPOINTMENT TO A TEMPORARY COMMISSION IN THE
REGULAR ARMY FOR THE PERIOD OF THE WAR.
The candidate will complete the following particulars and obtain certificates below as to character
and educational qualification.

1. Name in full { Surname. Christian names.	Shaw Rowan
2. Date of birth.	20 th May 1880
3. Whether married.	No
4. Whether of pure European descent.	Yes
5. Whether a British born or a naturalised British subject.	British born
6. Permanent address.	1/0 St. Robert Woods 89 Merrion Square Dublin
7. Present address for correspondence.	as above

(Above) Rowan's application for a Temporary Commission in the Army.
(Right) Obituary as published in the Irish Independent.



SECOND LIEUT. J. ROWAN SHAW,
9th Batt. Cheshire Regt., killed in France
during an important reconnaissance in
front of the trenches last week, was the
elder son of the late James J. Shaw, K.C.,
Recorder of Belfast, and a brother of Lady
Woods, of Merrion square, Dublin. He was
educated at St. Columba's College and
Trinity College, was a member of the Irish
Bar, and had practised as a lawyer in the
Federated Malay States for some years be-
fore the outbreak of the war. He was in
the Imperial Yeomanry in the S. African
War, winning the medal with 3 clasps.

the erection of the Cenotaph monument. In it, with any luck, would be the names of those memorialised on it. My letter to the Archives Authority had the good fortune to be passed to a long serving archivist on the verge of retirement.

He was not only familiar with Colonial records, but also helpful. A file created by the High Commissioner's Office included a listing which indicated that the R Shaw on the monument was in fact 2nd Lieut. Rowan Shaw of the Cheshire Regiment⁴. Daisy was correct about the 'w' in her father's given name but not entirely accurate with the spelling!

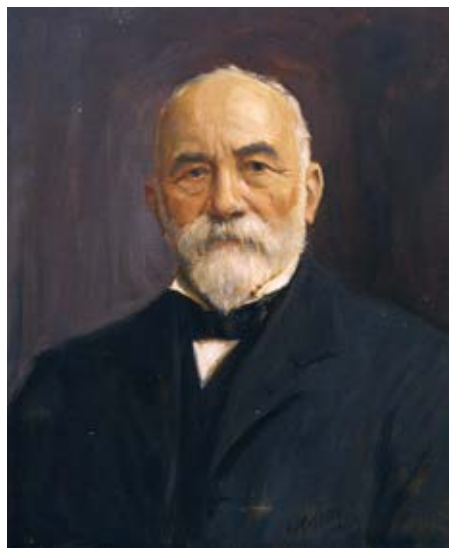
Buoyed by the breakthrough, I immediately wrote to the Cheshire Military Museum in Chester, England asking their researchers for help. The response was swift and it contained Rowan's personnel file⁵ and relevant pages from the Cheshire Regiment's war diary which outlined the circumstances of his death. I'd not only breached the brick wall and uncovered the identity of Daisy's dad but his story was rapidly unfolding.

When asked to record 'whether married' on the Application Form for a Temporary Commission in the Army, Rowan had written "No". This confirmed what I'd suspected. The rapid growth of the rubber industry in Malaya after 1900 saw a huge influx of young unmarried European men. With

few, if any prospects of marriage, sexual relations between them and Asian women were inevitable. Nevertheless, the Europeans knew full well that any close association with an Asiatic woman would be the equivalent of social suicide and that to appear in public with a Eurasian or Asian woman would have serious consequences. Daisy had also told me that her mother spoke little English, so with undeniable educational, social and cultural differences it was unlikely that Shaw and Meh Lian had a conventional relationship.

I also learned from the personnel file that Shaw's first given name was James, although he was generally known as Rowan and that he left Malaya to join the Cheshire Regiment in March 1915. He survived for only eleven months on the Western Front and was killed at Flanders in the early hours of the morning of 23rd February 1916 while on reconnaissance.

The biggest surprise however, was to read that his permanent address was recorded as c/- Lady Woods, 39 Merrion Square, Dublin. This Georgian square is located in a prestigious area of Dublin and at one time included the British Embassy and the homes of Oscar Wilde, W B Yeats and Daniel O'Connell. Lady Margaret Woods was revealed as the wife of Sir Robert Woods, a prominent Irish ear, nose and throat surgeon who for a short time had been a member of the British House of Commons and the Parliament



*(Left) 39 Merrion Square, Dublin, 1992. Former home of the Woods family.
(Right) James Johnston Shaw, portrait by Sydney Rowley. Queen's University, Belfast.*



'Marino', Ballybrack, Co. Dublin. Owned by the Woods family and later sold to the Australian Government.

of Southern Ireland. She was also Rowan's sister and their father was Judge James Johnston Shaw, Recorder of Belfast. He had rendered distinguished services to Irish education as a Commissioner of National Education and had also been a Senator of the Royal University of Ireland in addition to being, at the time of his death, Pro Chancellor of Queen's University, Belfast. Rowan Shaw not only came from a distinguished family, he was Irish! I wished I could have told Daisy. She would have laughed

and been both amazed and delighted to have her father's identity and his background revealed.

The twenty first century was ushered in with much fanfare and the trickle of information on the Internet turned into a flood. I occasionally checked new sites for more information about the Shaw family and Rowan's obituary, published in the *Irish Independent* of February 29th 1916 provided a photograph of him. I discovered that the Woods family had owned a country estate at Ballybrack outside Dublin which was later sold to the Australian Government and is still the residence of the Australian Ambassador to Ireland.

Rowan's will revealed that he had an interest in two rubber estates near Ipoh as well as a younger brother William, a career soldier, who was awarded the DSO in 1916 and later killed on the Western Front. Tragedy stalked the Shaw family during the war years. Rowan's nephew Thornley also died on the Western Front in October 1916. He was officially named William Thornley Stoker Woods after the famous Dublin surgeon William Thornley Stoker



***William Thornley Stoker Woods
– Rowan's nephew, the eldest son
of his sister Meg (Lady Margaret
Woods).***

who had an even more famous brother, Bram Stoker, the author of *Dracula*⁶.

I managed to obtain a copy of a book published in 1977 titled *An Irishman in Malaya*⁷ which chronicled the life of John Lowe Woods, the second son of Sir Robert and Lady Woods and brother of Thornley Woods. John had graduated from King's Inn, Dublin and gone out to Malaya in 1925 to join the Ipoh law firm of Cowdy and Jones as well as manage the family's rubber estates. The book contained the chilling account of Woods' incarceration by the Japanese in Changi Prison during the Second World War, and also gave insights into Rowan's schooling and the Shaw family in general.

However, it was some incidental information that I found by chance on the Internet that intrigued and puzzled me. The Ipoh Convent that Daisy attended as a small child was also named the Convent of the Holy Infant Jesus and was operated by the same order of French nuns who ran the Bukit Nanas boarding school in Kuala Lumpur. In addition, girls at the Ipoh convent in the 1920s were prepared for the Senior Cambridge Examination. Why then was Daisy sent to a school in Kuala Lumpur in 1921 when she could have received the same education in Ipoh? Why was she removed from her mother's care and never given permission to return to Ipoh, even during school holidays?

I was elated at discovering the identity of Daisy's father and his family but didn't have answers to all my questions. Who provided for Daisy and her mother and why? Caverhill's role was still a mystery. Did the Shaw family know of Daisy's existence? It would be another decade before this story took another dramatic and unexpected twist.

Midway...



*Where you will next be there's no knowing,
Facing round about me everywhere*

Over time, my elation subsided; occasionally I mulled over the various unanswered questions. Caverhill had to be the key which would unlock the story behind the decisions made for Daisy's welfare. Who was he, where did he fit in?

It's a matter of record that the Scot, William Bertram Caverhill was in South East Asia in 1910, the year of Daisy's birth. The twenty two year old arrived in Singapore in November 1909 to take up a position with The Straits Trading Company, then the largest tin smelting company in the world. There was no evidence however, to indicate that he was in Ipoh for any length of time before 1922 when he was appointed Manager of the Company's Ipoh branch. Newspaper articles at the time suggest that he was initially based at the Singapore Head Office before being transferred to Kuala Lumpur around 1919.

Despite my best efforts, I wasn't able to find any connection between Caverhill, the Scottish merchant and commercial agent and Shaw, the Irish barrister during the five years both lived and worked in South East Asia.

There was however, a breakthrough of sorts. A contact in the Malaysian Registrar's Office tracked down a copy of Daisy's ID card issued in January 1949 during the Malayan Emergency. On it, alongside Daisy's married name, was the annotation *d/o (daughter of) Rowan Shaw*. Daisy never wavered in the belief that her father's given name was Rowland and would not have provided the authorities with the name Rowan. The annotation on the ID card had to have come from an official source. Daisy's ID card was not a birth certificate but perhaps all that existed.

I reluctantly concluded that the answers I was seeking were known only to the small group of people involved, and all were now long gone from living memory.

The second decade of the 21st century picked up pace and the centenary of the First World War drew near. Such was the magnitude of this conflict that no country, community or family escaped the effects of those four



Front view of Daisy Martin's ID card issued by the Malayan government during the 1949 emergency.

terrible years. Interest in commemorative activities intensified and relevant materials were digitized and released.

In mid-2014, one of Daisy's grandchildren who was interested in Rowan's war service messaged me. He'd been accessing the Great War Forum on the Internet.



2nd Lieut Rowan Shaw c1915.

Hi Auntie Julie, I received this picture via Michael Pegum, who is researching a book on the men listed on the war memorials in Kildare Street and University club in Dublin. He received it from Rowan's great-nephew, Robert Woods. He was unaware that Rowan Shaw had married and had children and was hoping to find out more for inclusion in the book and I suggested that you may be a better person to talk to than myself. Out of interest, I merged the photo with the one that Grandma had and the facial features fit perfectly.
Andrew

Michael Pegum I discovered, was a retired Dublin surgeon and the creator of the website, *Irish War Memorials*. The photo he shared with Andrew was that which accompanied the announcement of Rowan's death in the *Irish Independent*.⁸

I was reluctant to give Pegum details of Daisy's birth and potentially inform Rowan's family of her existence in a very public way. For some time though, I'd had thoughts of contacting Robert Woods, Rowan's great nephew. Now there was a compelling reason. And so, in June 2014, taking a chance on an address I'd found in an online Dublin phone directory, I began my letter:

Dear Mr Woods,

...

Our family has often discussed whether Rowan's family in Dublin were aware that Rowan had a daughter born in Ipoh, Malaya (now Malaysia) in 1910, the result of a relationship between him and a Thai lady, Meh Lian...

And I waited.

Ten days later an email lobbed into my inbox. It began

Dear Julie, if I may

I received your letter this morning and you have struck gold!

...

The principal answer to your question is 'NO'. At least I had never heard of any Daisy Shaw and I feel that it likely that I would have heard something, but a child born out of wedlock, 100 years ago, and to a non-Caucasian would presumably, in those times, have been some sort of scandal and hence I am unsurprised that there is no knowledge in the family, at least in my generation!

I am sure that we can fill in lots of relevant information (photos?) etc., but I need to recover from the (wonderful!) surprise and make some time to help you!

Best wishes

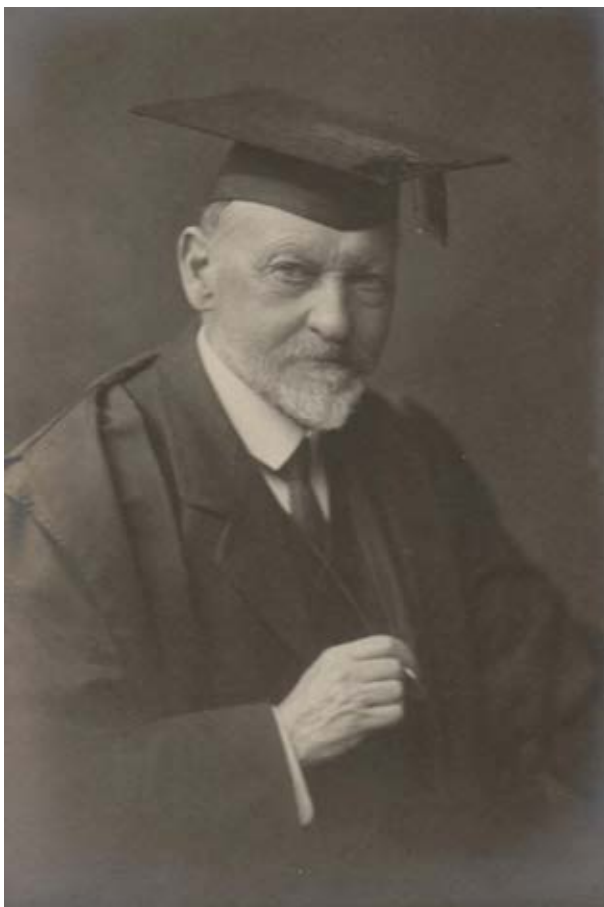
Robert Woods

And make time he did. Robert has a background in international business and his extensive experience has undoubtedly taught him to scrutinize and challenge any information presented to him. He asked the right questions and over time I answered them, persuading him that my research was sound.

The papers relating to the public lives of Judge Shaw and his daughter's husband, Sir Robert Woods, were donated some years ago to Dublin's Trinity College and Queens University, Belfast, however the family has an extensive personal archive consisting of documents, letters, photographs and objects and these Robert and his wife Ann generously scanned or photographed and shared with me over many months. Rowan was no longer just a



L to R: Mary (Molly) Woods, Mary Shaw (nee Maxwell) and Margaret (Meg) Woods (nee Shaw) – Rowan Shaw's niece, mother and sister. c1898.



*James Johnston Shaw
in academic dress. c1905.*



*Rowan's brother,
Major William (Billy) Shaw, DSO.*

name. He took on substance and a story of his own.

Most revealing and poignant was a collection of eighty three letters written by Rowan's father, Judge James Shaw to his second son, William (Billy) and those penned during 1908-1910 were highly significant to an understanding of what was going on in Rowan's life at the time.⁹

1908 was a year of deep personal sadness for the Judge. In early March, just six weeks after the death of his wife Mary, his second son William sailed for India with his regiment. In October of the same year, his eldest son Rowan went out to the Federated Malay States. Their father never saw either of them again.

Judge Shaw movingly describes the events of that year:

1908 March 07: *We shall all be very anxious to hear how you get on in your voyage and where you are sent. I was very sorry and a little ashamed I broke down at bidding you good-bye, but I had been thinking all day of your Mother and of all that she would have thought and felt at your departure and the recollection of it all and of my loneliness came suddenly back upon me and I lost my self-control. Dear Billy I do not grieve at you going wherever your duty takes you, and I know that wherever you go or on whatever duty you are sent you will always conduct yourself bravely and honourably. I would be the greatest sufferer if you shrank from any duty, or from any danger in the way of duty.*

1908 April 26: *I think Rowan is quite determined to take his flight from Ireland (for which I cannot blame him) and Canada seems to me the best place for him to try his luck. It is possible Rowan and I may have a run over to London in May. He is getting very restless here and wants to go to the Colonial Office to look for a job. I met a Canadian here at Jack McGillicuddy's who is now at the English bar and MP for York. He has given Rowan letters of introduction to several leading men in all the Provinces of Canada, so that if he goes out there he will have excellent introductions: I would much rather he went to Canada than to any of the Crown Colonies, most of which are in tropical climates.*

1908 June 11: *I was very glad to get home for a few days as it enabled me to see Mr Martin from Penang who was staying with Rowan. This is one of the partners in the firm whom Cowdy is working with in the Straits Settlements and I think I may say that Rowan and he have come to an agreement with my*



Station Road Ipoh. The large building on the right contains the offices of The Straits Trading Co. William Caverhill was appointed Manager of the Ipoh branch in 1922.

complete concurrence. Martin is a very nice fellow, a gentleman, and a thoroughly straight fellow if one can trust one's instincts. He proposes to take Rowan on a three year engagement, paying his passage out, and giving him £350 for the 1st year £420 for the 2nd & £490 for the 3rd. If Rowan is put in charge of an office of his own (which is the idea) he will have in addition to this salary, 10% on the net profits of the office. At the end of 3 years each party will be at full liberty, except that Rowan undertakes not to practice in Penang. I think these are very favourable terms. Martin says that Rowan can live well and be in everything that is going for about £200 a year, and if that is so I see no reason why he should not have a solid £500 at his back at the end of the three years. He will not go out till October so he will have the summer at home.

1908 June 18: *Rowan has concluded an engagement with Martin by an exchange of letters and goes out in October. I am sorry to part*

with him, but I am sure it is for his good. I see very little prospect of work for him in Ireland and it is time he was making some way in the world.



Rowan Shaw (seated far left) with friend Henry Cowdy (seated centre) in Europe. c1904.

1908 October 08: *Rowan left me on Friday morning last and I have seldom felt more lonely or downhearted. I was glad I had to go straight to court and that I have since been fully occupied both with work and social engagements. I am afraid the loneliness will be terrible when I go home, but fortunately I shall be going straight to Belfast on the University Commission very soon after I return.*

The surname Cowdy was frequently mentioned in the Judge's letters and Robert explained that Henry Lloyd Cowdy was a close friend of Rowan's and a fellow student at Dublin's Trinity College. He'd gone out to Malaya in 1907 to work for the legal firm of Logan and Ross and had persuaded one of the partners, SF Brereton Martin, a fellow Irishman, to return to Dublin in 1908, meet with Rowan and offer him a position in the firm's Ipoh office. When Rowan arrived in Malaya, he and Cowdy shared a house and it was their intention to go into business together when Rowan returned from active service.

Judge Shaw's letters went on to inadvertently reveal three important events that occurred in 1910, the year of Daisy's birth.

The first was that Rowan travelled to India in January to visit his brother Billy. They'd not seen one another in over two years and had a strong bond. Parting again would have been very difficult.

The second was that Rowan's good friend, Cowdy left Malaya in March for an eight month holiday in Ireland and was to marry his fiancée, Dorothy Percival on his return. Having recently said goodbye to his brother, Rowan was now farewelling his house-mate. He became the sole occupant of both the house and office in Ipoh.



Cowdy's house



Rowan Shaw convalescing after a bout of malaria. Ipoh, Malaya. c1910-1913.

1910 March 17: *We were all greatly interested in your letter and Rowan's telling us of Rowan's visit and all he has seen. I am very glad for both of you that you have had this pleasure. I suppose Rowan is hard at work again by this time, and Cowdy on his way home. We shall*

have great stories from Cowdy when he arrives and great fun unless the east has transformed him.

For Rowan, the third was the most profound

1910 March 17: *I went to Dr Beatty the day after I came up about a pain and oppression in my chest which I have felt for some time when walking, especially when walking uphill or against the wind. He examined me very carefully and could find nothing wrong in any of my organs. He thinks it must be the dregs of the bad cold I had in January and February. I am keeping very quiet and walking very little, as I cannot walk far without extreme pain. Otherwise I am in perfect health, and I cannot understand this development, which is quite a new thing for me.*

Rowan's father, Judge Shaw, suffered a heart attack and died five weeks later. He was sixty five. Rowan's sister, Lady Margaret Woods described her father thus in an introduction to his published papers

"To his children he was more than a father; he was an intimate and loved friend and comrade, a genial and big-hearted companion. He was large-minded and tolerant in every relation in life, and so honest and straightforward in all his dealings with his fellow-men, that he never expected dishonesty in others; it always came as a surprise to him. He was a man of strong and earnest convictions, deeply religious in the best sense of the word, and inflexible in his pursuit of what he believed to be right".¹⁰

In the first four months of 1910, Rowan had farewelled his brother, his close friend Cowdy and lost his much loved father. It would have been an intensely sad and lonely period.

It was then that I realised that the answers I'd been searching for were only a part of the story. It wasn't just about what had happened to Daisy, it was about the critical events that influenced Rowan's actions in Malaya in 1910. Now too, there was an important third person in the picture, Rowan's good friend Henry Lloyd Cowdy. When Rowan was killed, was it he who made the decisions about the direction of Daisy's life? Was he the link to Caverhill or was I still looking in the wrong place?

To add to this, a huge surprise was in the making.

An Ending...

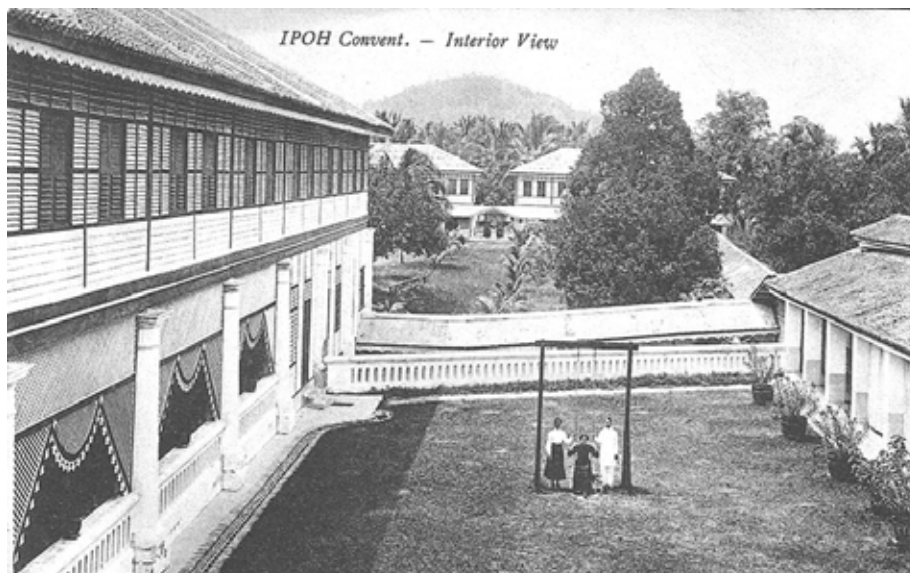


I see what you are doing: you are leading me on

The months scurried by. Suddenly it was 2016 and with a jolt I realised that 19 years had passed since I first began to look for information about Daisy's father. During those years, he'd been revealed as Irish lawyer Rowan Shaw, yet mysteries remained, one being William Caverhill, the man described by Daisy as her guardian. How was he connected to Rowan? Why did he have such an important role in Daisy's life?

I'd also been thinking about Meh Lian. After scrutinizing her photo and analysing the little I knew, an impression of her and her life with Daisy began to take shape. Inevitably, questions surfaced. The modest house they shared was in a respectable neighbourhood. Meh Lian spoke little English. How did she support herself and Daisy? Would she have had the language skills and confidence to enrol Daisy in the neighbouring European missionary schools? I had my doubts. With Rowan gone, Meh Lian would have needed guidance and financial help.

The revelation that Daisy could have received the same Convent education in Ipoh as she was given in Kuala Lumpur, albeit as a day scholar, convinced me that her future had been mapped out many years before she and Meh Lian met with William Caverhill. The move from the Anglo Chinese School to the Ipoh Convent appeared to be deliberate and made with the intention of familiarising Daisy with the French nuns and their way of life before entrusting her to their care in Kuala Lumpur.



The Convent of the Holy Infant Jesus, Ipoh, c1920.

So who looked after Meh Lian and Daisy after Rowan's departure from Malaya? There was now the possibility that it was Henry Lloyd Cowdy, Rowan's legal partner, former housemate and closest friend in Malaya. On the surface, he seemed the logical choice.

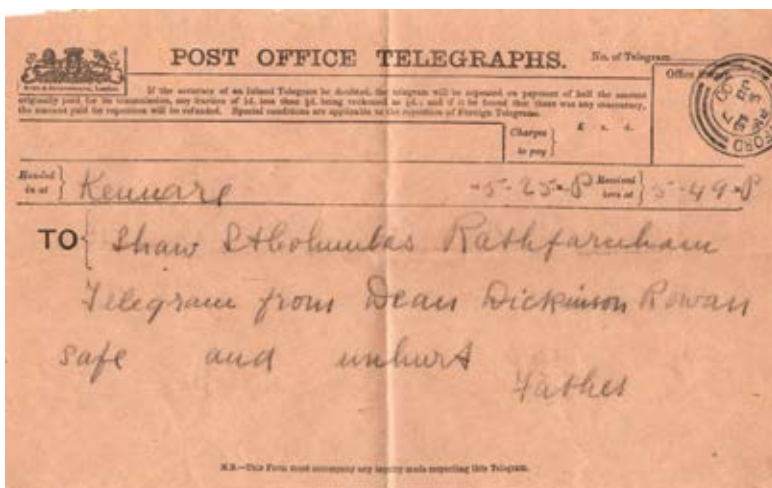
As I delved into Cowdy's story, I was reminded that both he and Rowan were in their mid-thirties when the Great War began. Both could have avoided service and remained in Malaya without any qualms of conscience. Indeed, a letter of condolence sent to Rowan's sister by Arthur Kenion, a fellow Ipoh lawyer, reinforces that view.

1916 March 31: *[Rowan] went to the front only because he felt he ought to: he felt he had military experience and that he ought to put it at his country's service, he put any personal consideration on one side- he was well- he thoroughly enjoyed life- he was passed the age when one likes an adventure (something new) he had had some years in the East and he had had some bother with sciatica or similar trouble. Frankly, I tried to persuade him not to go-but no doubt instinct told him he could and duty told him he should. I really thought the trenches and icy water after several years in the tropics would be too much. I was wrong, he became a fine officer.*

The earlier military service Kenion mentioned took place during the Boer War. In 1900, twenty year old Rowan volunteered to serve with



20 year old Rowan Shaw before departing for the Boer War. 1900.



Telegram sent to Rowan's brother, William (Billy) Shaw at St. Columba's College re Rowan's capture during the Boer War.

the 45th Regiment of the Imperial Yeomanry. He was captured during an engagement which became known as the Lindley Affair and held prisoner in South Africa for several months.

My investigations revealed that Cowdy didn't enlist with Rowan in 1915. It appears the two men agreed that Cowdy would stay behind and protect their position in Ipoh's legal circles and on Rowan's return, would start their own law practice. That, of course, didn't eventuate and in 1917, with casualties mounting and no end to the war in sight, Cowdy enlisted, sailed for Europe and entered officer training school in England. By the time he was commissioned in Sept 1918, the war was drawing to a close. Without any engagement in the conflict he was discharged and, accompanied by his wife, returned to Malaya.¹¹ With Rowan dead, Cowdy went into partnership with the Jones brothers, Harry and Edgar, and the practice later expanded to include Arthur Kenion and Eric Maxwell.¹² Tragically in 1925, Cowdy too was killed - in a motor vehicle accident.

None of Cowdy's movements between 1915 and 1925 seemed to have any connection to Daisy's life or that of Caverhill. No doubt the two men socialised at the Ipoh Club following Caverhill's appointment in 1922 as District Manager of The Straits Trading Company but apart from that, nothing.

My disappointment at yet another blind alley was totally forgotten when in March, I received an email from Rowan's great nephew Robert, which was headed "*The Woods are coming!*"



Robert and Ann Woods.

Not only had Robert and his wife Ann been so welcoming and helpful when I'd initially contacted them in 2014, they had now decided to journey half way around the world to meet me and Daisy's family which now spanned three generations and numbered over seventy-five.

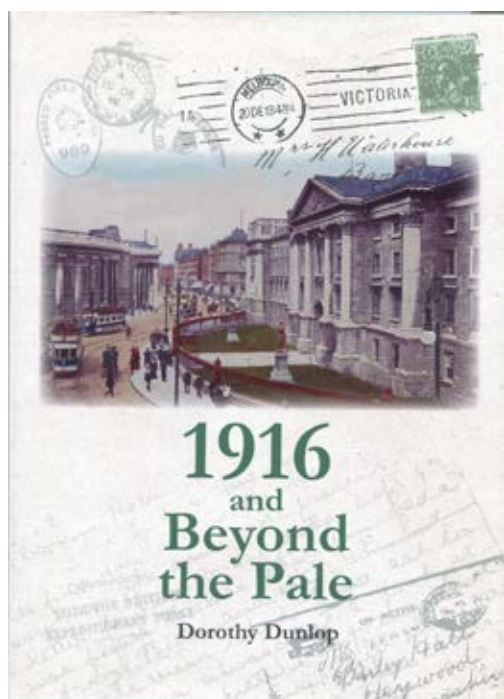
And so, in May 2016, on one of those magnificent autumn afternoons that Western Australia does so well, a large number of Daisy's children, grandchildren and great grandchildren assembled to meet a member of her father's family in the beautiful hills overlooking Perth.

It was the loveliest of days. Robert and Ann were charming guests and Rosemary, Daisy's eldest grandchild and her husband Mark, genial hosts. For many of Daisy's descendants, it was an opportunity to introduce new partners and babies to the assembled family as well as catch up on news and activities. There was much chatter and reminiscing; some brought along memorabilia and photos and I think foremost in everyone's mind was how much Daisy would have enjoyed not only seeing her expanding family come together, but seeing them connect to the family of the father she never knew.

Robert and Ann had arrived in Australia with gifts. At a private dinner, Robert, who was given the name Rowan to honour his great uncle, presented a silver match holder engraved with Rowan's initials, JRS and the date 1900 to my husband Rod, who had been given the name Rowland to commemorate



Silver match holder belonging to Rowan Shaw.



the same man. Although there was no reference to it in the Shaw family archives, it was thought that the match holder had been given to Rowan by his parents before he left for service in South Africa. It was a very emotional moment and a generous and thoughtful gesture by Robert and Ann.

They also gave us several books including Michael Pegum's *Our fallen members*¹³ which had been the catalyst for my initial contact with Robert in 2014. However, it was the volume by Dorothy Dunlop, Rowan's grandniece and Robert's cousin which I found engrossing. Titled *1916 and Beyond the Pale*¹⁴, it was a recent publication and told the story of the Shaw family's involvement in the Easter Rising in Dublin in 1916. During that period, Rowan's niece Molly began a day by day account of the situation as it played out around their Merrion Square residence.

This she sent to her brother Thornley who, at that time, was serving on the Western Front. The entire Shaw family became involved in the rescue of the wounded from both sides of the conflict and provided them with medical assistance in a makeshift hospital set up in their home. Molly was later to marry Gilbert Waterhouse whose spirited description of his part in the defence of Trinity College during that Easter is also included. Of singular interest to me though was the inclusion of transcribed letters to family members from Rowan, his brother William and their nephew Thornley while the three were on active service.

Reading that correspondence with the benefit of hindsight was incredibly poignant. All were killed on the Western Front in a fifteen month period from 1916-1917 and their observations and sentiments gave an insight into the family's close bond, as well as the personality and character of each man. It was a family historian's treasure trove.

Early on in our correspondence, I'd told Robert and Ann about William Caverhill and they'd combed the Shaw family archives, without success, for mention of him. During their visit to Perth, I again voiced my frustration at not understanding the circumstances behind Caverhill's appointment as

Daisy's guardian; I felt the answer was out there but I couldn't see it. It hovered on the edge of my vision but whenever I looked in its direction, it vanished.

Robert was as keen as I to know what had happened in Malaya over a hundred years ago.

'Let's imagine I'm Rowan. I'm in a foreign country and going off to war. I want to leave provision for Daisy to ensure that she has the best possible upbringing and education in the event that I don't come back. I can't reveal Daisy's existence to my family in Ireland and her Thai mother wouldn't have the skills and connections to negotiate on her behalf. Friends are out of the question. It wouldn't be reasonable to give them that responsibility and in any event, as a lawyer, I'd know not to entrust someone or something of great importance to any one individual. If that person was unable to continue in the role what would happen?'

He went on.

'Rowan and Caverhill were very likely strangers but I'm sure they had a mutual association. It wasn't their occupation, their nationality, their place of residence, their age or seemingly, their friends. But a mutual association is definitely where the answer lies.'

And together we scoured all the information I had on Caverhill.

'*There it is*' said Robert pointing to a small bundle of newspaper articles about Caverhill's activities in Malaya.

Caverhill had been an elder of the Perak Presbyterian Church, its Sessions Clerk and for some years, the treasurer. I'd absorbed that information but never saw a connection. Daisy's school was a Catholic institution and Rowan, an Irishman, was surely a Catholic too?

Robert countered, telling me the story of James Shaw, Rowan's father.

Born on the Ards Peninsula, a Protestant area of County Down to an Ulster Scots family, he wasn't the product of a privileged childhood as I'd thought.

His mother was left a widow at 37 with seven children to raise, the youngest born on the day of his father's death. She was not only left penniless, but also heavily in debt.

The local Presbyterian minister James Rowan, himself a man of great ability and vision, recognised in the young James Shaw an exceptional mind and took it upon himself to tutor him.

By the time Shaw was 24 he'd been appointed Professor of Ethics and Metaphysics, Queens College, Belfast, although earlier, because of the influence of James Rowan, he'd seriously considered joining the Ministry of the Irish Presbyterian Church. The Shaw family were devout Presbyterians. Religion was the link between Rowan, the Irish lawyer and Caverhill, the Scottish merchant!

Robert and I were convinced that before leaving Malaya for the Western Front, Rowan left provision for Daisy with the Presbyterian Church in Ipoh, an organisation he trusted to discretely administer his wishes and a body he confidently expected to flourish. When he was killed, the Church Committee devised a plan for Daisy's upbringing and education and later appointed Caverhill as her guardian. He, Caverhill, was charged with the organisation and management of Daisy's schooling at the Bukit Nanas Convent with the Ipoh based Committee seeing to Meh Lian's needs.

We'd examined the evidence and our conclusion fitted the known facts. Of course it was speculation, but it made sense. As Robert explained, it has long been a custom for elders in the Presbyterian Church to be allocated people or families to look after, either spiritually or financially or both.

There were still questions though, questions with answers buried deep in the hearts and minds of those involved. Was there a degree of Anglo Saxon vanity in the decision to entrust Daisy to the care of the French Catholic nuns rather than her mother? Possibly, but I have no doubt it was made within the context of the times and was the right decision. Did Daisy's mother, Meh Lian, have any say in the matter? I suspect not but remain convinced that she unselfishly accepted the decision as being in her daughter's best interest. Was it difficult for Daisy? Without a doubt, but the situation she faced would have taught her self-sufficiency and resilience and given her the ability to adapt, an ability she needed to call upon many times throughout her life.

Meh Lian's sacrifice and Rowan's acceptance of responsibility for Daisy were honoured. After qualifying as a teacher, she married electrical engineer

and fellow Eurasian, Donald Martin in 1934. These two exceptional people had a long, happy marriage and seven children, and were greatly loved and respected during their fifty-six years together.

After twenty years of searching for Daisy's Dad, my quest had come to an end and I was again reminded of lines from Thomas Hardy's poem, *After a Journey*

*"Yes: I have re-entered your olden haunts at last;
Through the years, through the dead scenes I have tracked you".*

Such is family history.



Daisy taught after her marriage to help educate the couple's children in Australia.

Clockwise from left:

Daisy at the piano, Kota Bharu, c1950.

Daisy with pupils, Kota Bharu, c1950.

Daisy in classroom with pupils, St Thomas Boys School, Kuantan, c1953.

Daisy and Donald Martin with the first three of their seven children, Taiping, 1940.



Postscript...



What have you now found to say of our past?

A few days after the June 2017 issue of the *Western Ancestor*¹⁵ began arriving in subscribers' letterboxes, I noticed that the red light on the answering machine attached to our home phone was blinking. I don't recall the exact message, but it was along the lines of

"I've just finished reading the second part of your story about Daisy's Dad. My grandfather is mentioned in it"

The message continued

"I have some items that I think might interest you"

Baffled is probably the best way to describe my feelings as I listened to that recorded message. I knew, or thought I knew all about the characters who wandered through my story of an Irish lawyer in Malaya and his daughter Daisy one hundred years ago. It didn't seem possible that any of them would have a grandchild in Perth, Western Australia. What had I missed?

The caller was Moyna Harland and as we talked, I realised that her grandfather was, as she claimed, mentioned in my article. Stevenson Fielding Martin or more accurately, Stevenson Fielding Brereton Martin (known to family and friends as 'SF') was mentioned several times in letters written by Rowan's father, Judge Shaw to his younger son, William, who at the time, was on military service in India.

The first reference to Brereton Martin in the Judge's correspondence occurred in **May 1908**

He (Rowan) has just had a note from Mr Martin, Cowdy's chief in the Straits Settlements who is at present staying in Newcastle, Co Down and is coming up to Dublin the first week in June. Rowan is just off to-day to Sandwich



Stevenson Fielding Brereton Martin.

for the Amateur Golf Championship, but will be back at the end of next week, in good time to see Martin. I hope something may come of their interview. I am sorry that I shall not be here as I go to Kerry on Tuesday next: I would like Rowan to get some settled occupation with a prospect of improvement, as I am afraid he is very unsettled at present.

He was mentioned again in **June 1908** in three separate letters

I was very glad to get home for a few days as it enabled me to see Mr Martin from Penang who was staying with Rowan. This is one of the partners in the firm whom Cowdy is working with in the Straits Settlements and I think I may say that Rowan and he have come to an agreement with my complete concurrence. Martin is a very nice fellow, a gentleman, and a thoroughly straight fellow if one can trust one's instincts... Martin says that Rowan can live well and be in everything that is going for about £200 a year, and if that is so I see no reason why he should not have a solid £500 at his back at the end of the three years.

... I forgot to tell you that Martin is a great golfer, and Rowan and he have been having great games at Dollymount.

He (Rowan) is now committed to Martin and the Straits Settlements and I hope it will turn out for his good. I think that he has better chances than if he were in the Govt. Service. He will have the making of his own career.

Then again in **December, 1908**

I send you Rowan's first letter after arriving at Penang in which you will be greatly interested. He has got on well so far and seems to be very favourably impressed with the country and his surroundings. It is a great thing for him to have two friends like Cowdy and Martin there before him.

in **January 1909**

The firm are going to provide a motor car for Cowdy and him, which they appreciate very highly. They are certainly well treated. Rowan

likes both partners, Armstrong and Martin, very much and they seem to like him. I am sure he will do well.

and finally in **March 1909**

I had a letter from Rowan last night. I would send it to you only that it is filled with details of a great law suit his firm is engaged in which you would not understand or care for. He says his fingers are worn to the bone taking notes, as the case has been going on from 10 till 6 for four or five days. Martin, one of his chiefs, has come down from Penang to conduct it.

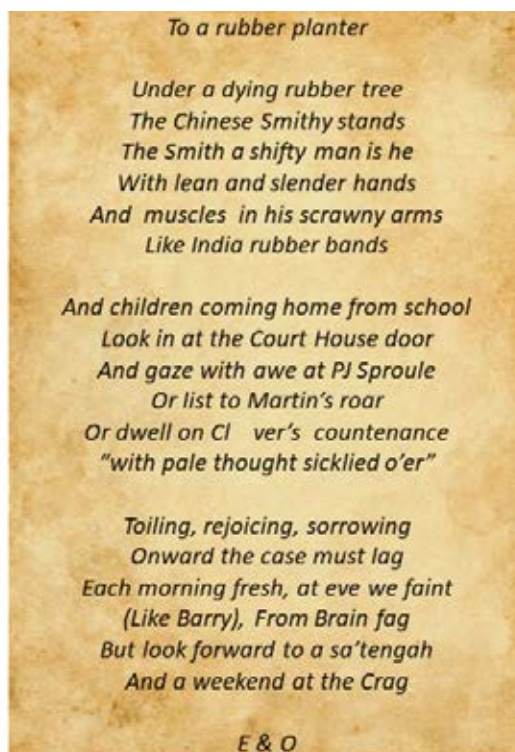
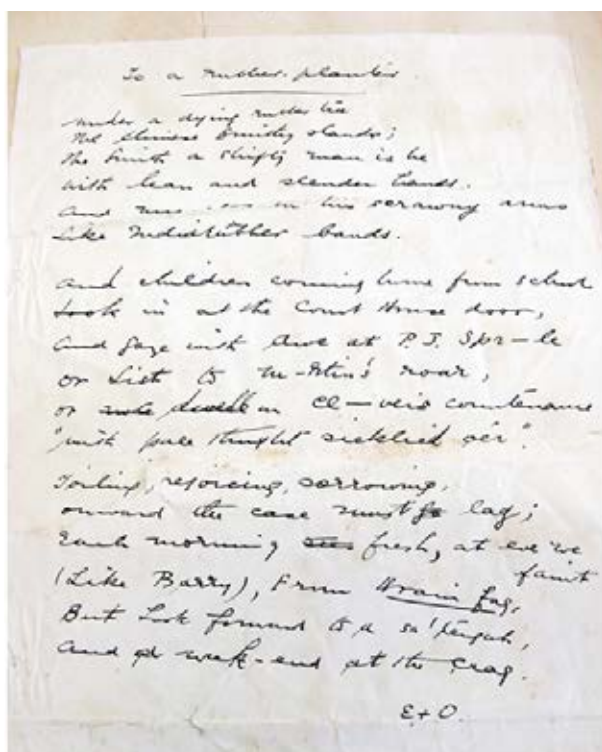
Having no personal recollections of her grandfather, Moyna was delighted to read Judge Shaw's assessment of him. I'd previously investigated Brereton Martin as someone who might have had a role in determining Daisy's future, but found nothing to connect him to her guardian, William Caverhill. Martin lived and worked in Georgetown on the island of Penang. Caverhill was based in Singapore. Martin was a member of the Church of Ireland, Caverhill, a Presbyterian.

From all that I'd read, Brereton Martin was an absorbing character. The following passages are extracted from an obituary published in a Singapore newspaper in May 1924.

Mr. Brereton Martin was a great all-round sportsman. He won the Tennis Championship of Perak in 1904, and the Penang Golf Championship in 1916. He was a great shot; he was credited with being the best snipe shot in the country. For this purpose he used to go frequently to Butterworth and round about Glugor. He was also a keen angler, and used to do a lot of fishing at home, but his activities in this direction here were somewhat restricted.

Brereton Martin was moreover a force in the local operatic world. His favourite role as he was wont to declare, was that of Pirate in the Pirates of Penzance, ...

It is well-known that Mr. Brereton Martin had a penchant for composing verse, and he was moreover an exceedingly clever artist. Some of his pencil drawings of Judges and other local luminaries may



Parody by SF Brereton Martin on Longfellow's poem, *The Village Blacksmith*.

still be seen at the offices of Messrs. Logan and Ross, Penang. He was often busy with pencil even in the Courts, while engaged in cases, and his sketches were at all times exceedingly clever.

But above all, Mr. Brereton Martin will be remembered as one of the best criminal lawyers of his day in Penang, and one of the kindest of men. A splendid speaker, he also had a great fund of wit and humour. But even more than this was his kindness of heart, his unfailing courtesy to one and all with whom he came in contact, irrespective of class or creed. He will also be remembered for his versatility and remarkable memory for verse.¹⁶

But there was more to the story. I met Moyna at our State Library and she brought with her an old scrapbook fashioned from pulp paper that was understandably showing signs of its age. It had belonged to her grandfather, and glued to the pages were simple but fascinating 6x8cm contact prints showing



A page of Brereton Martin's album showing three photos of the Mardenshaw Rubber Estate, 1912.

British colonials at leisure – horse races, golf, theatricals, etc. Nevertheless, it was the group of three photographs dated 12 February 1912 which were of particular interest to me.

One was captioned '*the noble owners of Martinshaw Estate*¹⁷' and showed Daisy's father, Rowan Shaw, alongside Moyna's grandfather, in front of avenues of young rubber trees. I knew that Rowan had an interest in rubber plantations as they were mentioned in his will made on the Western Front in October 1915.

"I give and bequeath to my only brother Captain William Maxwell Shaw of the Royal Field Artillery all my right title and interest in the rubber estates known as Mardenshaw and Dusan Bessar (sic) respectively, which said estates are situate near Ipoh in the Federated Malay State of Perak".¹⁸

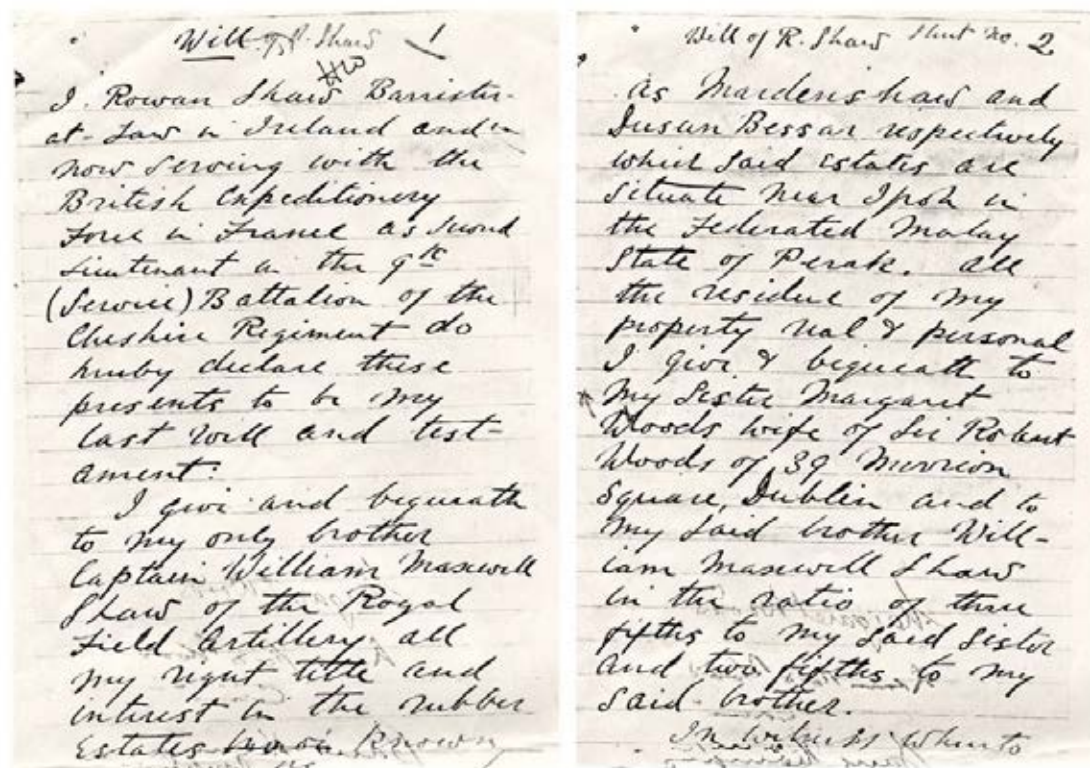


The noble owners of Martinshaw Estate.

*Kinpsi (?)
House in
Martinshaw
Estate 12/2/12.
Pearse & Shaw
confabulating.*



*F Pearse,
R Shaw,
contractor's
son & coolies
– Pointing out
landmarks in
Estate.*



Last will and testament. Rowan Shaw. 4 October, 1915.

and again in a letter sent to his sister Meg a month later

"I enclose a letter from Martin for safe keeping, it contains good news of Mardenshaw, which I reared and practically with my own hands laboured it to grow".¹⁹

but not that he owned Mardenshaw in partnership with Brereton Martin! It was incredible to see the property in those 100 year old photos but more especially, to see the two owners side by side.

What ultimately happened to Mardenshaw and Dusan Besar estates?

*The Directory of Malaya*²⁰ published in 1934 states that Dusan Besar was then jointly owned by Mrs D M Smythe, (Henry Cowdy's widow who, sixteen months after his death married Major Arthur Gordon Smythe in Rangoon), Lady Woods (Rowan's sister Meg) and Mrs F C Cowdy, (the wife of Cowdy's eldest brother, Charles) but there was no mention of Mardenshaw.

After the deaths of Rowan and his brother during the Great War, I presume the ownership of Mardenshaw passed to Rowan's sister Margaret and when Brereton Martin decided to retire in 1923 and return to Ireland, the two owners sold the estate.

During our meeting, Moyna told me something of the lives of her father and grandfather. Brereton Martin, accompanied by Lavinia his young bride went out to Malaya in 1903. He resided there for the next twenty years, returning to County Down, Ireland in 1923, a year before his death. Lavinia and an infant daughter remained behind in the Penang Cemetery.

The couple's four school-age children, including Moyna's father, William Percy Somerset Brereton Martin were sent home to Ireland to be educated. Men who chose to live and work in British colonial outposts had no option but be parted from their children for lengthy periods when they reached school age. The cost, both emotionally and financially was huge. As a result, Moyna's father hardly knew his parents and sadly was to know little of the lives of his own children.

Returning in 1932 to Malaya, the country of his birth with his young wife Mary, he celebrated the arrival of his first child, Moyna, in Singapore in 1940. However, eighteen months later, mother and daughter were on a ship bound for India, fleeing the impending Japanese invasion.

What then happened to Moyna's father was a mixture of adventure, espionage and courage. In January 1945, Major Brereton Martin of the Indian Engineers, having previously been mentioned in despatches, was betrayed and killed by the Japanese during a covert operation in the Malayan jungle. With her father dead, Moyna, her mother and baby brother left India and returned to live in England.

Two decades on, Roger Harland, who had emigrated from Scotland to Western Australia to farm at Esperance, returned to his birthplace to visit his parents. It was there that he met Moyna and after a long distance romance, she booked a passage to Australia in 1966 and disembarked at Fremantle. Roger and Moyna married in Perth the day after her arrival. Daisy and her family had settled in Western Australia eight years earlier.

And so Moyna and my husband Rod, two children born in South East Asia whose Irish grandfathers were colleagues and who jointly owned a rubber plantation in British Malaya at the beginning of the 20th century,

found themselves in Perth, Western Australia, entirely unaware of the other. I think the coincidence and discovery of their connection is extraordinary, however as the renowned statistician David J. Hand reveals in his publication *The Improbability Principle*, it's commonplace; he tells us we should all expect a miracle roughly once a month. I have little understanding of maths and will take his word for it.

Moyna's phone call and all that it revealed will go down on record as my miracle for June 2017.

Afterthoughts





Meg



Rowan



Thornley



Billy

A family at war 1915-1917

When Great Britain declared war on Germany in August 1914, the three Shaw siblings were far apart. Rowan was in Malaya, William (Billy) was with his Army Unit in Northamptonshire and Margaret (Meg) was in Dublin with her husband Robert Woods and their youngest child Patsy. The four older Woods children were in England; Molly at Cambridge University and Thornley, Jack and Bobby at Shrewsbury School in Shropshire.

The Woods residence in Merrion Square was home to Rowan and Billy whenever they were in Ireland and the children delighted in having their uncles around. *'Rowan was full of fun and ready for any games, while Billy was quieter and more responsible, but both were much loved'*.²¹

In late 1915 when the following extracts commence, thirty-five-year-old Rowan, Billy, thirty-three and Thornley, just nineteen were at the Western Front. Billy, now a Major had been awarded the Distinguished Service Order for conspicuous gallantry in action at Martinpuich, France in September 1915.

1915 December: Rowan to his sister Margaret (Meg)

Billy rode over yesterday and had lunch and dinner with us. He looked very fit and was in good form...

If leave is going in the beginning of January I think I can work mine on the same day as Billy gets his which will be very nice.

1915 December: William (Billy) to his niece, Mary (Molly)

On Saturday last I rode over to a certain village and saw Rowan. His battalion was in reserve there but went back to the trenches yesterday. I had lunch, tea and dinner with them and then rode back at dead of night to my own battery, a very perilous undertaking...

While I was down I saw Rowan's second in command and put in a strong word for his having leave at the same time as myself... It will be splendid if we are both home together, but the question that occurs to my mind is where are you going to put us all? I want you to stake out

a claim for us on Patsy's room, most of my clothes are there already and I know if I share a room with Rowan our things will get inextricably mixed up...

I am looking forward more than I can say to the comforts of a happy house again, and to seeing you all.

1916 January: Mary (Molly) to her brother Thornley

I am sorry not to have written sooner but we have been very busy lately. Billy arrived home on Tuesday morning in an exhausted condition but is all right again now. Rowan arrived this morning and is at present asking if the bath is very wet and wondering if he will catch cold if he takes one. They are both very cheery and full of buck...

1916 February: Margaret (Meg) to her daughter Mary (Molly)

A 25/2/15		POST OFFICE (Inland Official)		TELEGRAPHS. Telegrams only.		No. of Telegram 5240	
Office of Origin and Service Instructions O. H. M. S.		Words		Sent		I certify that this Telegram is sent on the service of the	
				At _____ M.		400	
				To _____		(Signature) E. H. M. M.	
				By _____		Dated Stamp	
Attention is called to the Regulations printed at the back hereof.							
TO Lady Woods 39 Morrison Square Dublin							
Deeply regret to inform you that 2nd Lt P. Shaw 6th Cavalry Regiment was killed February 23rd Lora Kitchener expresses her sympathy							
FROM SECRETARY, WAR OFFICE.							
The Name and Address of the Sender, IF NOT TO BE TELEGRAPHED, should be written in the space provided at the Back of the Form.							

My darling Molly

Our beloved Rowan has been killed – I had the telegram just now – on 23rd – no details. I know, my dearest, how you will feel it and my heart is aching for us all – God help us. He was so full of life and so

*gallant and brave, but he did the right thing and it was a glorious end.
 Forgive the scrawl. I can't write any more, it has been a bitter blow.
 Your loving Mother.*

1916 February: William (Billy) to his sister Margaret (Meg)

My dearest Megsie,

I'm afraid the shock of Rowan's death will bear very hardly on you I can hardly yet realize it myself but I am sure you will be relieved to know that he was killed instantaneously and suffered no pain of any sort. I got a message on the evening of the 23rd saying that he had been killed that morning on patrol. I was able to get a car to take me to his funeral and there heard the full particulars. He was out patrolling for a German sap that was being pushed forward in front of their part of the line and which it was most important to locate accurately as they suspected a mine and intended to bomb this sap the next night. He did a complete and most thorough reconnaissance and came back safely, wrote a detailed report and sent it in but it seems that he was not quite satisfied in his own mind about some small detail of the country. With an absolute disregard of the danger and without any compulsion on him except his strong sense of duty he went out again at about 3 am with his patrol of one sergeant and two men. While they were out this time they met a German patrol and got down safely into one of our advanced saps the German patrol disappeared rather hurriedly and Rowan anxious to make certain what had become of them jumped up on the parapet, he was immediately shot by a sniper somewhere in the region of the heart and fell back with a very slight moan. His patrol brought him in to our trenches and the doctor was with him in five minutes he was then dead and the doctor says that death must have been instantaneous. His face was perfectly placid and showed no sign of any strain and I doubt if he had time to realize he was hit. He is buried in a reserved British cemetery well behind the firing line. His was a fine death and one which I'm sure since it had to come he would have preferred to any other. He was one of the most popular officers in his Battalion and they all agreed in saying that throughout the time he has been at the Front he was always ready to take any risk in

order to satisfy himself down to the minutest detail that he had found out all that could be found out. His divisional General told me that his fault was that he was too daring and didn't take sufficient care of myself, but this after all is what we both always knew. We have at least the consolation of knowing that death had no terrors for him, he was cheerful and enjoyed his life thoroughly up to the last minute.

I am enclosing a letter that his Colonel wrote me and which I think you would like to see and preserve. I also enclose two letters that were found on him one to you and one to Gracie, you might forward Gracie's on to her. His kit etc. will be sent on to you by the War Office, his personal effects cigarette case watch etc. have been handed over to me and if you like I will send them home to you. I'm afraid I can say nothing that it will bring you any consolation at present in time no doubt we will realize with pride that he died the finest death that can be given to any man. I have hardly realized yet what his loss means to me. Ever your loving brother, Billy

1916 February: Margaret (Meg) to her daughter Mary (Molly)

I have heard from Rowan's captain. He was out on patrol duty with a sergeant and two bombers and they saw a small party of Germans who suddenly disappeared. Rowan stood up to see where they had gone and was shot instantly. There was snow on the ground and they were within 30 yards of the German trench, so they couldn't have missed him. He was killed instantaneously and they brought his body in. Captain Jackson wired to Billy and they buried him behind the lines at Pont-du-Hem, between Estaires and La Bassee.

Don't grieve, I am trying not to – let us feel nothing but pride in his gallant memory. I wanted you to know at one that he did not suffer. All the horrors were spared to him. He was evidently so keen about the bit of work that he forgot his own safety – it was like him, the dear brave fellow. Don't think about wearing black until you come home – thank goodness, soon now!

I am trying to go on as usual and make no difference. There is so much grief in the world just now that we ought not to inflict our private

sorrows on our friends. I am afraid my letter yesterday was very curt, but I was dazed with the shock. Forgive me for telling you like that, but it could not have been worse than opening the telegram.

Thank God, Thornley and Billy are safe – at least I hope so – but one never knows now.....

1916 October: Margaret (Meg) to her daughter Mary (Molly)

My darling

Thornley was killed on Oct.27th. There isn't anything to say to you – but we must be brave

With all my love

Your loving Mother

1916 November: Margaret (Meg) to her daughter Mary (Molly)

My darling Child

We have a small grain of comfort today. He was asleep in his dugout when the shell fell and death must have been instantaneous. In fact, he probably never knew anything – simply never awakened. The telegram said – 'died of wounds'. I did not tell you as I wanted to spare you what I have suffered for 24 hours, with visions of horror and pain – but now we know it was swift and merciful. I have no comfort to offer you but that, but my dear I know what he was to you and what your loss and sorrow is and you have my heart's whole sympathy. Your father thinks you ought not to come home, but we don't want to be Spartan about it. He thinks we shall fight out these dreadful days better alone, and that your work and being with strangers will help you, but if you feel you must come my darling, just do. It is much to have you left and the other three. We had a letter from him this morning written on Oct 26th – the day before – and he was well.

Would you like to wear black? It is entirely a matter for yourself – you know how little it matters, but if you would feel better to do it let me know what you want sent.

Darling, time is the only softener of a blow like this. We must just set our teeth and endure – there is no comfort and no short cut. In time, the pain will lessen and the pride in his glorious manhood dominates us, but we have a hard road to travel.

With all my love dearest,

Ever your loving Mother

1916 November: William (Billy) to his niece Mary (Molly)

My dearest Molly

Your note came as a great shock to me, it was the first intimation I had had and then I saw the confirmation in Monday's paper. I can't tell you how I feel for you, having lost a brother myself I know and realise something of what you're going through now. Your pluck in sticking it out alone in Cambridge touched me very deeply. It's awfully hard to say anything in consolation that doesn't sound hackneyed and banal but I think a feeling of pride in your brother's supreme self-sacrifice for all that decent men hold sacred will supersede over your grief in time. He has given his life for his country. No man can do more and you would not have had your brother do less. I am feeling awfully anxious about your mother, but I also feel sure that her pride and splendid courage will come to her aid.

Will you let me know as soon as possible how she is?

It is awful out here at present, letters and papers sometimes taking as much as a fortnight to reach us.

God bless you, my dear old girl,

Ever your loving uncle, Billy

1916 November: Cyril Sutherin to Jack Woods, brother of Thornley Woods

Dear Woods

I am writing you this letter as I thought perhaps you would like some further details concerning your brother's death at the front. Which I can give you as I was with him at the time.

Thornley and I had constructed a little dugout in a shallow hole with sandbagged sides and some curved iron for roof and it served very well as shelter from the wet, though it was in no way shell proof, none of us having any protection from shell fire.

At about 9.30pm just after we had gone to bed (in our clothes) the enemy started to shell us. We thought it useless moving from our shelter as it was a pitch black night and everywhere deep shell holes full of liquid mud and no one spot safer than another.

Within a few minutes a big shell fell close beside us and blew in the whole dugout completely, burying poor Thornley and myself.

We were stunned for a short while and then found that although we could just talk to each other we could neither of us move an inch in any part of our body.

At first we were able to breathe fairly well, but as time elapsed it became increasingly difficult and the pressure on our bodies from the weight of earth and on our lungs through the lack of air was terrible and our limbs gradually became cramped and numbed. By this time we fully realised that nothing short of a miracle could save us and we had only sufficient breath to talk to each other and could not shout.

Your brother like the brave boy he was died knowing it must be the end, yet with his thoughts only for you all at home and for the safety of his men. ...

The help we prayed for came eventually but just too late to save your brother – a few more minutes and it would have been too late also for me.

A letter to Cyril Sutherin from his rescuer indicates that Thornley and Cyril were buried for approximately two and a half hours. When the two men were rescued, Thornley was breathing, but by the time he reached the dressing-station, he had died.

1916 December: William (Billy) to his sister's husband Robert Woods

My Dear Robert

I have not written to you before because I was waiting for a reply to my letter to Thornley's CO. I have now had it. He was asleep with another officer in his dugout when a shell crashed through and there is no doubt that death was absolutely instantaneous in fact it seems doubtful if he had time to wake up at all. ...

Thornley must have been in a couple of miles of me when he was killed but of course out here it is impossible to find out where everybody is. Had I known soon enough I would have gone over and seen his grave but we are now over 100 miles from there..

Billy continued to write to Meg and Molly and indicated that he hoped to be home on leave in January 1917. That leave didn't eventuate. Instead, he was Mentioned in Despatches for his bravery in the field.

A letter in mid-February again mentioned the possibility of leave in Ireland, this time for 10 days in early March and that '*he was looking forward to a holiday enormously*'.

Then silence, followed by reports of his death, killed in action on 28th May, 1917.

No further letters survive. The family's grief at this third loss was, no doubt, beyond words.

*Note: These excerpts have been taken from the Shaw Family correspondence 1913-1917 and most are reproduced in full in **1916 and Beyond the Pale** by Dorothy Dunlop.*

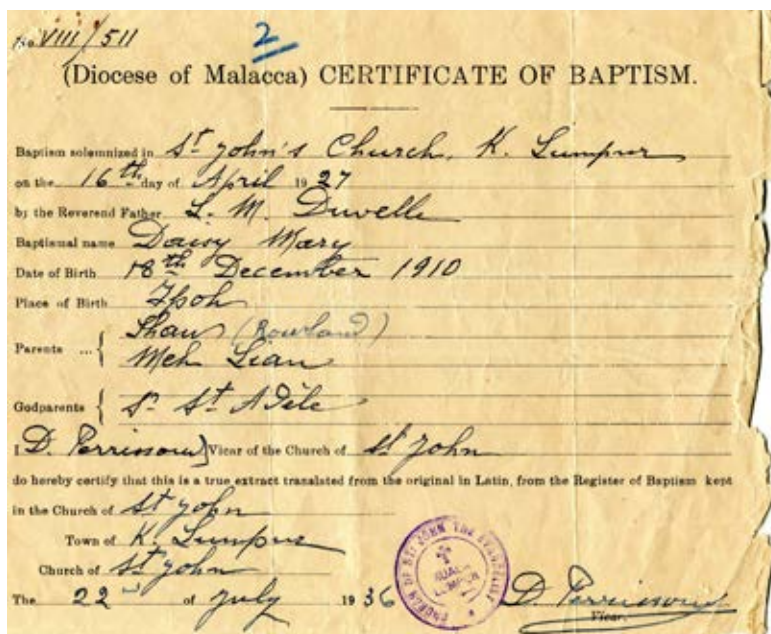
Religion and principles

Daisy I believe, always had faith - that inner wisdom and innate sense of what was right and wrong, a belief in a higher being. In her seventeenth year, she chose Catholicism as the means of expressing that faith.

Her choice was predictable. The greatest influences on her life after she left Ipoh were Catholic nuns, the Daughters of St Maur. It was their example, beliefs and values that permeated her and enriched her life.

There's a certain irony though in Daisy choosing to be baptised into the Catholic Church when her father Rowan was an Irish Protestant. The sectarian conflict between Catholics and Protestants in Ireland is well documented. So too is the irony that her decision to embrace Catholicism was facilitated I believe, by the Presbyterian Church through its agent, William Caverhill.

But then I came across passages from several of Judge Shaw's letters written in 1909.



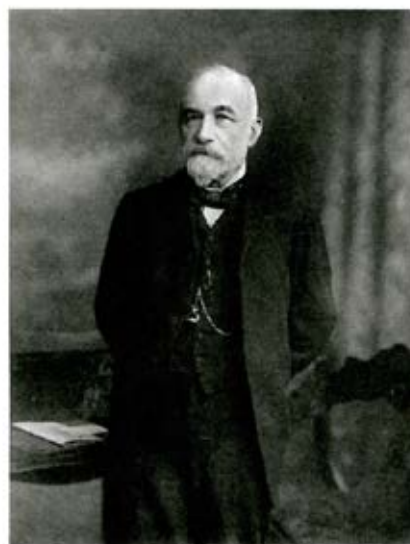
*Daisy's certificate of baptism,
dated 16 April 1927.*



*Daisy, aged 16,
after her baptism in 1927.*

In that year, after Rowan and his brother William had left Ireland for Malaya and India respectively, Judge Shaw was appointed to the Belfast University Commission and was chosen by the then King as its chairman. The major task of the Commission was to frame the statutes which would shape the direction and tone of the University.

Of Shaw's stewardship of the Belfast University Commission, the Queen's University Vice-Chancellor at the time, the Rev. Thomas Hamilton, recalled:



James J. Shaw

"His one desire throughout was simply to make our University as perfect an instrument as could be devised for the education of the youth of the North of Ireland, and this irrespective of all the irrelevant considerations of creed or class or sex, by which it is too often complicated. Nothing could change his mind on this last point. He would have no privilege conferred on any one, so far as educational opportunities were concerned, because of such considerations. Still less would he allow any disability to be inflicted on account of them. The doors of the University must be open, really and truly, to all Ulster, and all Ulster must know that they were so open, and that whosoever would, might enter into them". ²²

The details of the Judge's work on the Commission are lovingly described by his daughter Lady Margaret Woods in her introduction to his *Occasional Papers* and in it, she elaborated on her father's opposition to a petition presented to the Irish Privy Council in 1909 by Lord Londonderry and others against a Lectureship in Scholastic Philosophy at Queen's University.

"They (the Commissioners) believed that this step would be the first real and sincere effort that had been made in Ireland to bring Protestants and Roman Catholics together in a common university, and that the mingling of Roman Catholic and Protestant students in the University

would be productive of great benefits to both sects, and prove a most effective means for softening the religious animosities which are such a deplorable feature of life in Ulster.

The controversy about this Lectureship was a very painful one to my father. He did what he believed to be right, and his action brought him into conflict with some of his oldest friends”²³

Judge Shaw alluded to this controversy in letters to his youngest son William

1909 June: *We have got into very hot water in Belfast. We gave the Roman Catholics a lectureship in scholastic philosophy in order to induce them to come to the University, and all the Protestantism of Ulster is in flames. The General Assembly denounced us and we are assailed on every side. It would not be safe for any of us to be seen near an Orange meeting...*

1909 August: *There is a Petition by the Presbyterian party in Belfast against one of our Statutes by which we provide in the New University for the poor Papists. I don't think the Petitioner will get much encouragement from the Presbyterian Council but I must be at home to see that our own case is properly presented. There is no generosity or liberality about these Presbyterian friends of mine. They regard me as a sort of traitor because I want to make room in the University for the Roman Catholics. The University is getting a great start in spite of all attempts to belittle or damage it. The RC Bishop has appointed a Dean to look after RC students for the first time since the College was founded 60 years ago. I am very proud of that.*

1909 November: *The new University has got a great start, and is succeeding so far as numbers are concerned far beyond what we expected. There are over forty Roman Catholic students, a new and startling development. The RC bishop is most friendly and enthusiastic.*

What would Rowan have thought about Daisy's choice of religion? Having been exposed to his father's liberal views, sense of fair play and wisdom, I doubt he'd have any misgivings.



Notes and references

- ¹ This conversation was recorded on cassette tape in 1992 and has subsequently been digitised. A copy of the sound file has been given to all seven of Daisy's children.
- ² Butcher, John G. *The British in Malaya 1880-1941. The social history of a European Community in Colonial South East Asia*. Kuala Lumpur, OUP, 1979. p202
- ³ The records of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission were only available on CD-ROM at that time. They were later expanded, comprehensively indexed and converted to a digital format.
- ⁴ Federated Malay States. High Commissioner's Office. HC 2058/1918. *Monument in memory of those who fell in the war and tablet with names of those who served in it*.
- ⁵ Great Britain. War Office: Officers' Services, First World War, Long number papers (numerical). 1915-1916. 2/Lieutenant Rowan SHAW. The Cheshire Regiment. WO 339/28638.
- ⁶ Woods, Robert Tristram. Family anecdote
- ⁷ Moreton, Dorothy E. *An Irishman in Malaya: John Lowe Woods*. Volturra Press, 1977.
- ⁸ *Irish Independent*. 29 February, 1916. p2
- ⁹ Ann Woods generously transcribed Judge Shaw's letters and provided me with digital copies. They give a remarkable insight into their author, James Johnston Shaw and the Shaw/Woods family.
- ¹⁰ Shaw, James Johnston. *Occasional papers with a biographical introduction by Margaret G Woods*. Dublin, Hodges, Figgis & Co., 1910. pliii-liv
- ¹¹ Great Britain. War Office: Officers' Services, First World War, personal files (alphabetical). 1917-1921. 2/Lieutenant Henry Lloyd COWDY. Royal Garrison Artillery. WO374/15969.
- ¹² Devadason, James. *A history of Maxwell, Kenion, Cowdy & Jones*. The Author, 1996.
- ¹³ Pegum, Michael. *Our fallen members: the war casualties of the Kildare Street and Dublin University Clubs*. The Club, 2015.
- ¹⁴ Dunlop, Dorothy. *1916 and Beyond the Pale*. Motelands Publishing, 1916.
- ¹⁵ *Western Ancestor*. Journal of the Western Australian Genealogical Society Inc. 2017 13 (10) June.
- ¹⁶ *The Singapore Free Press and Mercantile Advertiser* (Weekly), 21 May 1924. p9
- ¹⁷ Brereton Martin clearly identifies the estate as 'Martinshaw' in the captions beneath his photographs whilst Rowan, in documents, refers to it as 'Mardenshaw'. Although the name 'Martinshaw' makes perfect sense, mention is made on page sixty seven of the book *Generations; the story of Batu Gajah* by Ho Tak Ming of a Mardenshaw Estate which in the 1920s, was owned by one of ten planting companies in the Batu Gajah area.
- ¹⁸ Great Britain. War Office: Officers' Services, First World War, Long number papers (numerical). 1915-1916. 2/Lieutenant Rowan SHAW. The Cheshire Regiment. WO 339/28638.
- ¹⁹ Dunlop, Dorothy. *1916 and Beyond the Pale*. Motelands Publishing, 1916. p41
- ²⁰ *Directory of Malaya 1933-34*. Singapore, C.A. Ribeiro & Co, 1934. p756
- ²¹ Dunlop, Dorothy. *1916 and Beyond the Pale*. Motelands Publishing, 1916. p8
- ²² Shaw, James Johnston. *Occasional papers with a biographical introduction by Margaret G Woods*. Dublin, Hodges, Figgis & Co., 1910. pxlvi-xxlviii
- ²³ Shaw, James Johnston. *Occasional papers with a biographical introduction by Margaret G Woods*. Dublin, Hodges, Figgis & Co., 1910. pl-li

The Shaw Family

James Johnston Shaw
(1845 - 1910)

**Margaret (Meg) Gamble
Maxwell Shaw**
(1872 - 1949)
& Robert Henry Woods
(1865 - 1938)

James Rowan Shaw
(1880 - 1916)
& Meh Lian

Daisy Marie Shaw
(1910 - 1993)
& Donald Eustace Martin
(1907 - 1990)

Mary (Molly) Elizabeth Woods
(1895 - 1980)

William Thornley Stoker Woods
(1896 - 1916)

Mary Elizabeth Maxwell
(1842 - 1908)

**William (Billy)
Maxwell Shaw**
(1882 - 1917)

Annie Johnston Shaw
(1885 - 1886)

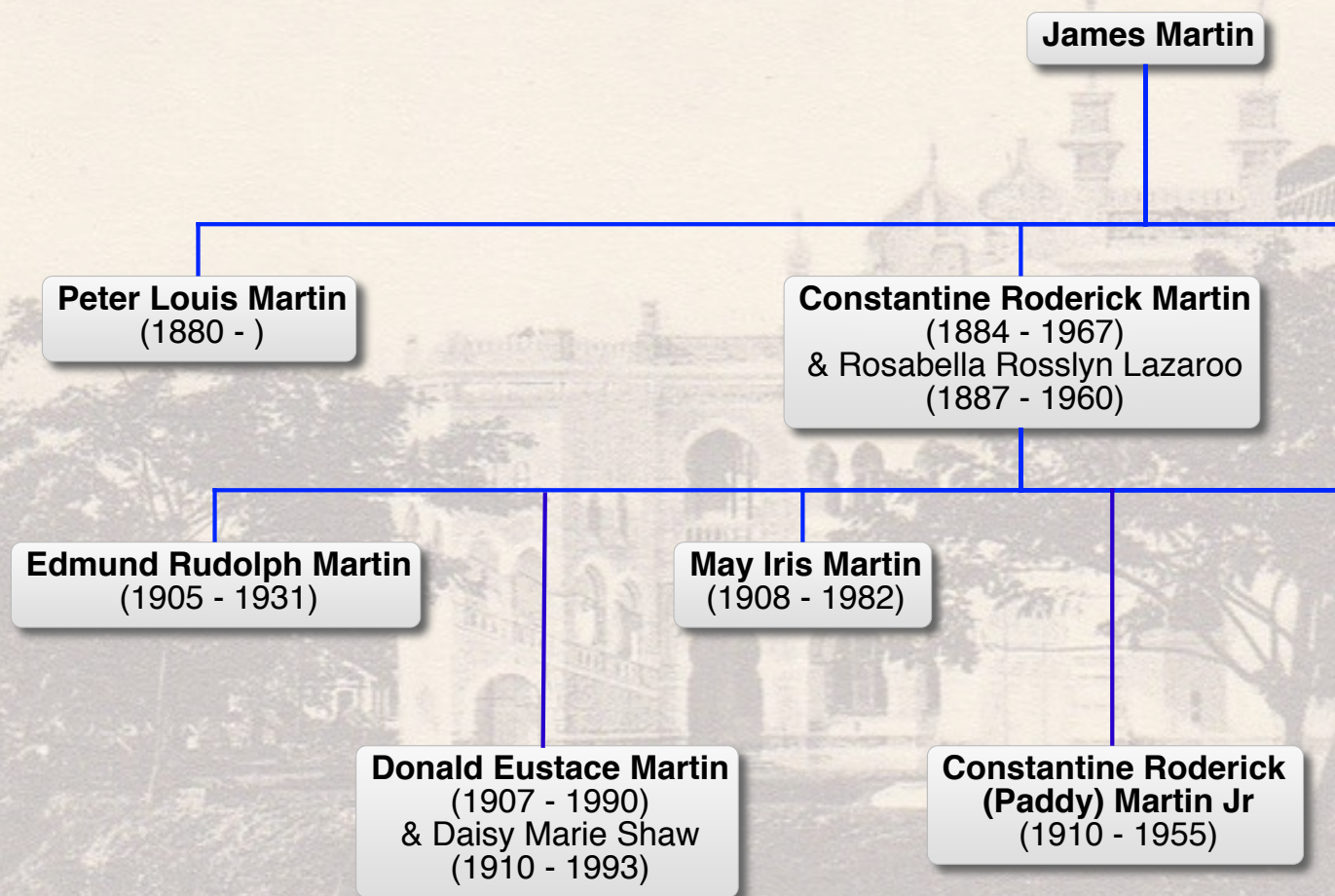
John (Jack) Lowe Woods
(1899 - 1956)

Robert (Bobby) Rowan Woods
(1902 - 1971)

Patricia Marjory Woods
(1904 - 1997)

Westmoreland St., Dublin.

The Martin Family



**Harriette Clementine
Unknown**

**Clementine Martin
(1886 - 1949)**

**Leonie Armande Martin
(1891 - 1966)**

**Hamilton Boniface
Martin
(1911 - 1984)**

**Victoria Maria
Martin
(1917 - 1978)**

**Andre Martin
(1921 - 1922)**

**Harriette Alexandra
Martin
(1913 - 1940)**

**Adrienne Martin
(1919 - 1983)**

About the Author:

Twentieth century librarians weren't just the collectors and custodians of information, they were also its interpreters. It was a privileged and enormously satisfying role. Day after day they set out on the 'chase' for their clients - writers, academics, researchers, the public. Armed with intimate knowledge of the material in their collections, they doggedly pursued answers. For forty years, Julie was one of them.



Although she worked with various specialist collections during that time, her greatest love has always been for the original and published materials which collectively tell the stories of the people and places in her part of the world, Western Australia.

In retirement, research and the sharing of information is still her passion. She also pursues the stories of family. *Discovering Daisy's Dad* is one such story.

*I know nothing...
Strange thing. I never
thought of asking all those
things when I was younger*